

# Jorge Caravana Collection



## GOLDSMITHS IN INDIAN WEAPONRY

Nuno Vassallo e Silva, Museu Calouste Gulbenkian

Translated by Dr. Vanda Noronha

In his first trip to India, in Malindi on the African Eastern Coast, Vasco da Gama was received by its king, just before leaving for Calicut. The description that Gaspar Correia left us relates that the Portuguese Admiral had offered the monarch a rich sword in enamelled gold, “with its straps very rich as used in that time” which he brought in a box and also a spear of golden iron and a dagger lined with crimson satin embroidered with gold thread. At the moment of offering, Vasco da Gama explained to the new ally of the King of Portugal “Lord, the reward for great feats is to give the arms in a sign of true friendship, and brotherhood”<sup>1</sup>.

From the historical point of view, this episode raises some doubts, seeing as the Portuguese took few offerings which would truly impress the local lords in this first trip, which by itself attests the lack of knowledge they had of the places they would find. At times, Vasco da Gama would even give his own weapons, which bears out to the lack of offerings which accompanied our navigators. But, on the other hand, as we would like to stress here, it attests to a significant fact; the importance that weapons, particularly ceremonial bladed weapons, will have in the exchanges between monarchs and other reigning figures in the construction of the Eastern Empire. Weapons, no less important from an artistic point of view, be they in this case pieces in enamelled gold or in “gold thread”, a common designation at the time for filigree.

In the pages that follow we have sought to trace a brief portrait of the art of goldsmiths and other Indian luxury workshops, which is well displayed in the weapons of the Indian sub-continent which have come down to our time. Above all in the hilts, scabbards, chapes and other elements which allow for decoration, most notable examples are known, with an ornamental freedom that at times surprises us and which we can see in the collection of Jorge Caravana. We will thus recollect some of the first acquisitions by the Portuguese in India, their shipment to the court in Lisbon, revealing some offerings and commissions of ceremonial weapons made by now in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, without forgetting the significance which weaponry in the Mughal weaponry achieved in India. We conclude with some notes referring to two daggers. One, a Kris, kept in Vienna, was probably made in Goa, under the influence of the several arts that the Portuguese found and developed in the East. The other, a dagger with a gold

---

<sup>1</sup> Gaspar Correia, *Lendas da Índia*, I, Porto, 1974, pp. 55-56.

scabbard, richly ornamented with precious stones, is extremely well described, but its whereabouts are unfortunately unknown.

But if there were several weapons sent from India to the Portuguese Court, ceremonial weapons were also dispatched from the Royal Armoury to the empire. In the offerings from the Embassy sent by D. Manuel to Prester John, in 1512, several weapons were to be found such as “A sword with golden arms, and with a blue pommel, hilt and chape”, and yet another sword “belted, golden and blue with a velvet scabbard and cloth straps”<sup>2</sup>.

## 1. Weapons in the Construction of an Empire

Having conquered Goa, Afonso de Albuquerque was simultaneously launching the roots for the creation of the future Portuguese State in India, which would extend from the Persian Gulf to the Chinese Sea, where the foundation of the *Casa da Moeda*, in 1510, had a decisive importance, permitting beyond the financial interest, the circulation of coin with the weapons of the King of Portugal. In a short time the offers and acquisitions of precious pieces for the King D. Manuel are taking place, evidence of the wealth and importance of the new lands that he now dominated.

It was, however, the weapons, almost always impressive in precious metals, that the first governor of India sent to the new allies of Portugal, which would work as true ambassadors of the maritime power which was emerging. In his letters, Afonso de Albuquerque enumerates some of those offerings, many of which were acquired in Goa's market or even from private individuals.

We know thus that in October of 1513, fourteen and a half *pardaos* were paid to Nuno Freire for a dagger ornamented with silver, which Afonso de Albuquerque had taken from him to give to the reeve of the Adil Khan<sup>3</sup>. In the following year he took from the wife of Manuel Arraez, for various offerings, a strap in golden silver and a dagger with a scabbard and *tachadeira* of the same metal<sup>4</sup>. On November of 1514, in the Embassy sent to the King of Cambay, a dagger in gold stood out, with rubies in the hilt, of which its gold ornamentation had cost forty-nine *cruzados*, with an *arelhana* (belt) equally ornamented with gold in the value of ten *pardaos*, without taking into account the rubies which enriched it<sup>5</sup>.

In May of 1515 an event of great importance takes place with the sending of a Portuguese embassy to Sheik Ishmael where, once again, weapons occupied an importance place<sup>6</sup>. Headed by Fernão Gomes de Lemos, the embassy had as a mission to try to appease the Shah of Persian in what related to the construction of the Portuguese fortress of Hormuz. Before it, the Portuguese governor received in Hormuz an emissary of the Shah, who according to the words of João de Barros, presented “the present; and because among the pieces there was a strap of gold, and a sword, which

---

<sup>2</sup> Sousa Viterbo, *A Armaria em Portugal, segunda série*, pp. 4-5, *Cartas de Afonso de Albuquerque*, II, Lisboa, Academia das Ciências, 1898, pp. 149-150.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*, II, 1898, p. 117.

<sup>4</sup> *Cartas de Afonso de Albuquerque*, VI, p. 40.

<sup>5</sup> *Cartas de Afonso de Albuquerque*, II, p. 132.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, II, p. 149.

pleasing the ambassador, he asked for, Afonso de Albuquerque gave all, as a sign of peace and love between them”<sup>7</sup>. As in the meeting of Vasco the Gama in Malindi, the offering of richly wrought weapons sealed alliances, friendships and new backings. To the Shah were sent several jewels and ceremonial weapons enriched with gold <sup>8</sup>.

But if there were many weapons given by Albuquerque to the Eastern rulers, he equally gave them to his monarch. In December of 1513, Afonso de Albuquerque sends to D. Manuel a dagger ornamented with gold with a ruby and a pearl. A weapon entrusted, as was common practice, to the captain of the carrack *S. Cristóvão*, which then left from Goa to the Kingdom <sup>9</sup>.

The inventory made in the bedroom and treasury of the Palace of the *Ribeira* after the death of D. Manuel bears out the presence, in Lisbon, of countless precious oriental weapons, the first received in Europe.

Among the many weapons that Pedro Carvalho, fidalgo of the house of D. João III, gave to Rui Leite, “a gold knife from India that the King bought from Alexandre d’Ataide with its gold scabbard and a gold chain with which it is hung” stood out<sup>10</sup>. The reference to the giver is not only an indication in order to facilitate the piece’s identification but equally a sign of appreciation. Alexandre de Ataide was the Jew captured in 1510 in a carrack to Mecca, who after conversion became the translator of Afonso de Albuquerque, having even been in Lisbon’s court, at which time he would have made a gift to the monarch.

Another dagger was given to D. Manuel by the king of Narasingha “with many diamonds and rubies with a gold scabbard and its knife and a pearl in the hilt of the chape”. Also coming from India, there were to be found “two kris with wood scabbards, one with seven rubies and another with eight rubies and the hilts made out of images of women in horn and the scabbards are lined with gold from India with some precious stones in the hilt where they are”<sup>11</sup>. Pieces of probable Malay origin with the characteristic figures serving as hilts. Without declaring their Indian or eastern origin, we also find a reference to the kris that Simão da Silveira gave to the King, with the scabbard all “full of rubies” and a crystal hilt. This weapon was certainly acquired between 1515 and 1518, when Simão da Silveira was in India accompanying Lopo Soares de Albergaria <sup>12</sup>. Interestingly, D. Manuel owned two Indian shields, wrought in silver <sup>13</sup>.

But this inventory is equally a fundamental document for the study of the production of weapons by goldsmiths, above all jewellers, “goldsmiths of gold” in the terminology of the 1500s. It was from this source that Sousa Viterbo sought help for his work on

---

<sup>7</sup> João de Barros, *Década Segunda da Ásia*, vol. IV, Lisboa, Livraria São Carlos, 1973, p. 425.

<sup>8</sup> *Cartas de Afonso de Albuquerque*, II, Lisboa, Academia das Ciências, 1898, pp. 149-150, Nuno Vassallo e Silva, “Diplomatic embassies and precious objects in Hormuz: an artistic perspective” in *Revisiting Hormuz: Portuguese Interactions in the Persian Gulf Region in the Early Modern Period*, ed. Dejanirah Couto e Rui Manuel Loureiro, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz Verlag, 2008, p.219.

<sup>9</sup> *Cartas de Afonso de Albuquerque*, II, p. 118.

<sup>10</sup> Anselmo Braamcamp Freire, “Inventário do Guarda Roupas de D. Manuel” in *Arquivo Historico Português*, Vol. II, Lisboa, 1904, p. 384.

<sup>11</sup> Idem, *Ibidem*, p. 384.

goldsmith-swordsmiths and goldsmiths making equestrian apparel, revealing names such as Gonçalo de Mesa, Fernão Lopes, João Caldeirão, Vicente Caldeirão, Alvaro Pais or João Fernandes<sup>14</sup>. These were goldsmiths who executed the most diverse jewels, in addition to weapons, some of which were sent by D. Manuel to the East, such as the crown engraved in gold by João Caldeirão, which in 1515 D. Manuel gave to the king of Cochin, through D. Francisco de Almeida <sup>15</sup>.

## 2. Goa, Goldsmiths and weapons

With the arrival of the Portuguese navigators and the creation of fortresses, there arrived in India not only European weapons but also the weaponsmiths who made them, cleaned then and sold them. Sousa Viterbo enumerated some of the documented weaponsmiths who worked in Portuguese India, a trade consecrated in the new Regulations of the City of Goa, in 1627 <sup>16</sup>. However, and even before this, at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the regiment which ordered the way in which the city of Goa would receive, in solemn march, the viceroys, explicitly noted that the spear makers and weaponsmiths should have their doors and store fronts “with many spears, weapons, *armilhas*<sup>17</sup> and helmets”<sup>18</sup>.

An important letter, dating from January 1527, directed to D. João III, itemises the complaints which six Portuguese weaponsmiths residing in Cochin, Fernão Pires, João Anes, Pedro Anes, Afonso Pires and Nicolau Gonçalves, headed by Gaspar de Castanheira, made concerning the imposition of a trade tax. According to the subscribers, since in the privileges and ways of the Kingdom they were exempt from paying taxes on their work, this was now being imposed on them against all the traditions<sup>19</sup>.

Later, in 1550, Bernardim Paulo, weaponsmith in Goa, received letters of privilege, since by having his shop always open and stocked with all that was necessary for his work, D. João III would exempt him from serving in times of peace or war <sup>20</sup>. A year later, the armoury master of the city of Goa, António Toscano, was succeeded in his post by Jorge Toscano, his son<sup>21</sup>.

---

<sup>12</sup> Pedro Dias, “A Descoberta do Oriente”, in *A Herança de Rauluchantim: Ourivesaria e Objectos Preciosos da Índia para Portugal nos séculos XVI - XVIII*, (catálogo de exposição), Lisboa, Museu de S. Roque / CNPCDP, 1996, p. 41.

<sup>13</sup> Anselmo Braamcamp Freire, p. 417.

<sup>14</sup> Sousa Viterbo, *Artes e Industrias Metálicas em Portugal: Ourives-espadeiros, ourives da gineta e freeiros*, Lisboa, 1903.

<sup>15</sup> Reynaldo dos Santos e Irene Quilhó, *Ourivesaria Portuguesa nas Coleções Particulares*, 2<sup>a</sup> edição, Lisboa, 1974, p. 269.

<sup>16</sup> Teotónio de Souza, *Goa Medieval*, Lisboa, Estampa, 1993, p. 153.

<sup>17</sup> Short piece of clothing worn under the arms and armour. – Translator’s Note.

<sup>18</sup> Teixeira de Aragão, *Descrição geral e Histórica das Moedas cunhadas, Descrição Geral e Histórica das Moedas*, vol. III, Lisboa, Imprensa Nacional, 1890, p. 70.

<sup>19</sup> Sousa Viterbo, *A Armaria em Portugal*, pp. 47-49.

<sup>20</sup> Idem, *Ibidem*, pp. 130-131.

Many of the ceremonial weapons sent from Goa, be they for the court or for the allies of the King of Portugal, were bought in its very rich market of precious items. It is certain that many came from the most diverse parts of India, while others were made in the workshops of the capital of the Portuguese State of India. Such was the case with a dagger made by the *Mocadão* (chief) of the Goan goldsmiths, Rauluchantim, in 1515, for D. Manuel. Certainly the piece had been well regarded by Afonso de Albuquerque who had commissioned it, seeing as in that same year he sends the goldsmith to Lisbon in order to make works “in the style and use of India” for the Portuguese monarch <sup>22</sup>.

Much later, in 1638, in the embassy of Rodrigo Sousa e Castro to Aceh, a very rich kris was sent, with the hilt, *bocal*, and chape in diamond incrustated gold. A work executed in Goa, of which its ornamentation had cost the Portuguese State in India’s treasury 10 121 *xerafins* and 3 *tangas*, having the work of the imported goldsmith cost 460 *xerafins* and 38 *reis*<sup>23</sup>. 9080 *xerafins* and two *tangas* were spent solely on diamonds. Unfortunately, we do not know if the blade was also of Goan manufacture, seeing as the document only refers the spending on gold ornamentation. It was very possibly acquired in the shop if a specialized weaponsmith.

We know very little about the production of weapons in Goa. However, these two cases, chronologically distant, attest that from early on goldsmiths collaborated in the production of ceremonial weapons, particularly in a city where the precious raw materials could be easily found. In fact, for the hilt of the kris destined to the King of Aceh “gold from China” was bought in Goa, assuring the “perfection of said hilt” seeing as it is of great purity, around 23 carats, which bears out the richness and variety of the raw materials available in the capital of the Portuguese State of India. We should add that in the decade of 1620, under the government of D. Francisco da Gama, the news spread in the Rua Direita, centre of the commerce of precious items in Goa, of a bastard sword made of gold and garnished with diamonds, which the viceroy would take to Filipe II of Portugal <sup>24</sup>.

### 3. Weapons for the Great-Mughal

It was in Mughal India that weapons achieved the greatest splendour from an artistic point of view, allying the work of the weaponsmith to the goldsmith, enameller, jeweller and gemcutter.

---

<sup>21</sup> Idem, *Ibidem*, p. 157.

<sup>22</sup> Nuno Vassallo e Silva, *A Ourivesaria entre Portugal e a Índia: Século XVI ao século XVIII*, Lisboa, Santander Totta, 2008, pp. 46-47.

<sup>23</sup> «List of the cost of the *sagoado* that went from this state to the king of Aceh by the ambassador Francisco de Sousa de Castro

Then thousand one hundred and one *xerafins* and two *tangas* that cost a hilt of the kris with its *bocal* and chape of diamonds and gold by this way nine thousand and eighty *xerafins* and two *tangas* of two hundred and nine diamonds and one mark five gold ounces and five hundred and seventy one *xerafins* four *tangas* and twenty two *reis* of two marks three ounces and thirty six grains of gold from China which was bought for the perfection of said hilt and the four hundred and seventy *xerafins* and thirty eight *reis* of shape of said hilt that ones and others do of the said ten thousand one hundred and one *xerafins* and two *tangas* 10121-2-00! » AN/TT, Livro das Monções, L<sup>o</sup> 43, fl. 205, in Idem, *Ibidem*, pp. 112-113.

<sup>24</sup> Idem, *Ibidem*, p. 89.

In 1575, Goa received an embassy or mission, sent by the Mughal emperor Akbar, of enormous resonance and importance at the time. Akbar had had contact with several Portuguese merchants during campaigns in Khambat three years earlier and was very impressed with these “exotic” Europeans. At the time, he had even let himself be dressed in the Portuguese way. In the mission that he sent to Goa, headed by Haji Habibullah, he sought to know more about the Portuguese, designated by *firangis*, asking as well that several curiosities from Europe be acquired in addition to clothing, swords and cross-belts<sup>25</sup>. Throughout almost a year, the Mughals were in Goa learning many of the European techniques, which they took, together with Portuguese artificers, back to the empire, in the north of India.

Also of note is an exceptional dagger scabbard, made in gold at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup>, which is certainly marked by the period of the presence of Mughal artificers in Goa, who influenced the local production, an influence which is present in pieces such as the treasure of *Vidigueira* in the *Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga*, and of which it is a major example, particularly in the silver straps of the tortoise and mother-of-pearl coffer (Londres, Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art)<sup>26</sup>. Of a typically European shape, it presents a fully engraved surface with fine floral motifs of Eastern taste but where wild acanthuses of evident classicist inspiration stand out. This scabbard of which, unfortunately, the original dagger is unknown, may have been a Portuguese commission to offer to a Mughal high-dignitary. Still in 1620, D. Francisco da Gama sought to give to the nephew of the ambassador of emperor Jahangir, some “Spanish-style” clothing, meaning, with black hats with colourful feathers and a sword. The Jesuit priest António Monserrate, who stayed in the Imperial Court, in Fatehpur Sikri and Lahore, between 1580 and 1582, describes how Akbar liked to use, in his daily life, both swords and dagger of European make<sup>27</sup>.

In the Empire, the most appreciated weapons, in steel with gold inlays, were those coming from Hindustan and Iran<sup>28</sup>. Based in the imperial Court, the artificers began a production which came to accompany and assimilate the most diverse styles. Some of the weapons known today seem more akin to jewels, and decorations, making their initial function of defence an almost symbolic reminiscence, even if they never lose their lethal functionality. Many of these weapons are the result of offerings to military individuals for having distinguished themselves in campaigns, being shown at court as a sign of distinction.

A painting from the so-called Shah Jahan album, in the Chester Beatty Library, authored by Hunham in around 1650/1658, depicts Rustam Khan, one of the most celebrated military men in the Empire. The great care the painter shows in the details, as was characteristic of the Mughal school, permits us to observe a series of jewels and ornaments, which reflect the brilliant military career of the one portrayed who presents himself with two swords and one dagger, richly ornamented with gold and precious stones, as well as several jewels in his turban. In the hilt of one of the swords, some

---

<sup>25</sup> Nuno Vassallo e Silva, “Pedras preciosas, jóias e camafeus: a viagem de Jacques de Coutre de Goa a Agra” in *Goa e o Grão Mogol*, Lisboa / Londres, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian / Scala Publishers, 2004, p. 118.

<sup>26</sup> *Goa e Grão Mogol*, cat. 119.

<sup>27</sup> *The Commentary of father Monserrate, S.J. on his journey to the Court of Akbar*, trad. of. S. Hoyland, New Delhi, Asian Educational Services, 1992, p. 198.

<sup>28</sup> Susan Stronge, “Na terra do Mogor” in *Goa e Grão Mogol*, p. 139.

remarkable diamonds are clearly visible. Many of these jewels and weapons were a gift from the Emperor Shah Jahan himself after the campaigns in Kandahar, between 1649-1650, which the military man proudly shows, and which accompanied him in the most important ceremonies at court<sup>29</sup>.

The presence of artificers of the most diverse nations of the Empire, among which several European ones, decisively influenced the production of weapons. As an example, we should note a Mughal dagger (*kard*), belonging to a private collection, dated to around 1629-36, in white jade, showing at its top the head of a child. This head reminds us of the head of a figure of the child Christ, as we can see in the ivories of Goa, having a typically Portuguese or Spanish collar. Very likely it would have been made by a gemcutter of European origin, since we are aware of their presence in the courts of the Emperors Jahangir and Shah Jahan<sup>30</sup>. In a painting depicting Prince Salim, future Emperor Jahangir, he appears with a very similar *kard*, with a head at the top of the hilt, supported by the belt<sup>31</sup>. We should be reminded of the Portuguese Lourenço Mendes, who for many years designed and created jewels for Shah Jahan, who were then enriched with precious stones and enamelling by Mughal goldsmiths, and that Father Botelho met in Delhi in 1648<sup>32</sup>.

As Stephen Markel wrote, the delicate aesthetic sense shown in the Mughal decorative arts is equally patent in the weapons created for the Emperor and the Imperial army. Both the daggers and the swords had richly decorated hilts in the most diverse materials, with blades made in the finest damask metal. The shields were equally ornamented with a great variety of materials<sup>33</sup>.

A great number of Mughal dagger hilts, engraved in hard stones, has come down to our days. Often they are shaped as animals, such as lions, rams or even horses. These were some of the most common and appreciated themes. Some use only floral motifs, at times with a very rich gemcutting work. We know that the hilts and blades were sold separately, as appears in a miniature where several bladeless hilts are on sale.

At times the hilts and scabbards were completely made out of gold, in the *kundan* technique, a process of covering solid resin with successive layers of gold leaf, which the Portuguese called “*condena* gold”, set with precious stones. Such was probably the technique used in the dagger offered to D. Sebastião, which we will broach further ahead. Not less common are the hilts in hard stones, such as rock crystal or jade, often enriched with ornaments in gold and gems. A good example of such is the dagger with a horse’s head in the Caravana collection.

---

<sup>29</sup> Susan Stronge, “Decorative Arts in Mughal Painting” in *Muraqqa’ Imperial Mughal Albums*, ed. Elaine Wright, Alexandria, Virginia, 2008, pp. 189-200.

<sup>30</sup> Robert Elgood, “Mughal Arms and the Indian Court Tradition” in *Jewellery Studies*, vol. 10, London, 2004, p. 80; Manuel Keene, *Treasury of the World: Jeweled Arts of India in the Age of the Mughals*, London, Thames & Hudson/The al-Sabah Collection, 2001, cat. 13.1, p. 143.

<sup>31</sup> *The Indian heritage: court life & arts under Mughal rule*, (cat. de exposição), Londres, Victoria & Albert Museum, 1982., cat. 50.

<sup>32</sup> Susan Stronge, “A Terra do «Mogor», p. 145.

<sup>33</sup> Stephen Markel, “Jades, jewels and objects of art”, in *Romance of the Taj Mahal*, ed. Pratapaditya Pal, Londres/Los Angeles, 1989, p. 154.

From the collection we also emphasize two shields: one engraved in silver and a second one in enamelled copper. The first one, circular, as usual, reveals in five panels figures of high dignitaries, seating in front of a balustrade which separates them from a garden. All the remaining background is engraved with rich interlaced vegetation. It comes from the armoury of the Sultan Tippu of Mysore, made in the last quarter of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, largely influenced by Mughal goldsmithing, with its surfaces completely engraved. The second shield, which we believe to be chronologically more ancient, is completely covered in opaque enamel, using the *champlevé* technique<sup>34</sup>. It is a piece probably executed in the Deccan, showing in its centre rich floral motifs framing fighting animals, a recurring theme in Mughal shields.

On the presence, at a now later date, of Mughal weapons in Portugal, we would like to note the dagger with a gold hilt and scabbard enriched with diamonds, rubies and emeralds sent in 1700 by the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb to Pedro II. Its destiny is completely unknown to us<sup>35</sup>.

#### **4. Kris das Deutscher Orden. Synthesis of the Portuguese Presence in the East.**

In 2000 we had the opportunity to examine a truly exceptional piece belonging to the Deutscher Orden, in Vienna<sup>36</sup>. It is a Malay kris, enriched with ornamental elements originating in several places, all of them associated with the Portuguese presence in the East. The kris has a blade which is sumptuously ornamented with vegetation and animal motifs. The hilt, in rhinoceros horn, represents a fantastical figure, half human, half bird, enriched with gold, rubies and sapphires. The scabbard is in green lacquered wood with the depiction of animal, plant and flower elements in gold.

The oldest documental reference to this kris is to be found in the Inventory of the Goods of Archduke Maximilian, made in Innsbruck in 1619. It is successively referenced in the Inventories of the Deutscher Orden throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> century, being specifically referred as Indian in 1632. This piece presents itself as a work of great interest for the history of artistic relations in the East, as it has some very particular characteristics, being a piece successively enriched with elements from various origins. The kris is Malay, the hilt having elements in gold and gems, always in a combination of rubies and sapphires, which are consistent with the production attributed to Sri Lanka, as Tamil Nadu jewellery, of which important examples are known. These are works where the value of the materials is small – the gems usually little more than mediocre – but this is compensated by the attractive elements in gold. The element of connection, a half-sphere, between the blade and the hilt of the present kris, is very close to Sri Lankan jewels which have come down to our days. This element, for instance, takes us

---

<sup>34</sup> For an element from a shield using the same decorative process, attributed to Mughal India or the Deccan see Manuel Keene, *Treasury of the World*, cat. 6.11, p. 66.

<sup>35</sup> *O Índico na Biblioteca da Ajuda*, Lisbon, CNCDP, 1998, p. 304.

<sup>36</sup> *Exotica. Os Descobrimentos portugueses e as Câmaras de Maravilhas do Renascimento*, (catálogo de exposição), coord. Helmut Trnek e Nuno Vassallo e Silva, Lisboa, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 2001, cat. 87 (Portuguese version of the exhibition, *Exotica: Portugals Entdeckungen in Spiegel fürstlicher Kunts - und Wunderkammern der Renaissance*, Wien, Kunsthistorisches Museum, 2000).



back to the globe shaped bases of rock crystal figures of the child Christ, or even the base of a seal, also in rock crystal, with rubies and sapphires, belonging to the Austrian imperial collections<sup>37</sup>.

The scabbard, in lacquered and golden wood is, however, harder to attribute an origin to. Several works have suggested new attributions for the lacquered pieces made in the East for the Portuguese market. This lacquer work has been the target of great interest in the last decade, having been attributed fundamentally to two artistic centres: Cochin and the Bengal Coast. To Cochin, due to its importance in the creation of wood works and its placement between Goa and Southeast Asia. To this can be added the presence of an important Chinese community. Another suggestion is the Bengal Coast, further to the north, where lacquered works were executed and where there can be found embroidered cloths with similar motifs, adding to this the descriptions of travellers which referred the production of lacquered works in this region<sup>38</sup>.

This kind of ornamentation, with obvious alterations, is associated to very sumptuous pieces made for the Portuguese market, but whose exact origin has still not been possible to determine. This is the case of the interior of a ray-skin shield, equally painted with flowers and little gold animals<sup>39</sup>. The same ornamental grammar appears in the so called “table of Cardinal Alberto”. Both works are for the first time referenced in the 1596 inventory of the collection of Archduke Ferdinand II of the Tyrol<sup>40</sup>. Closer to us, similar motifs, lacquered in gold in the interior of the coffer of the Church of the *Barbadinhos* in Lisbon, from the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, stand out<sup>41</sup>.

Such a great number of disparate influences, but all associated with the Portuguese empire and the luxury commerce that then developed, suggest, according to the opinion of Jean-Michel Massing, the hypothesis of this work having originated in one single place, a centre of great cosmopolitanism, as is the case of Goa or the yet to be discovered marketplace of Malacca<sup>42</sup>.

This kris appears as a true synthesis of several productions, which makes it a truly unique exemplar. May it be noted that there are only forty Malay kris known in European collections previous to 1800, this being the most ancient and doubtlessly the most interesting one.

## 5. The Dagger of D. Sebastião

One of the documents that best attest the very high recognition in Portugal of the works of Indian weaponsmiths and goldsmiths can be found in the description of the reception, in the Swan Room of the palace of Sintra, of the ambassador of the sultan of Bijapur, by D. Sebastião in 1575. Relating all the ceremonial in the letter that he sent to Rome, the Jesuit Fernando Guerreiro, describes with great detail the gold dagger that the

---

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*, cat. 76.

<sup>38</sup> Pedro Moura Carvalho “Um conjunto de lacas quinhentistas para o mercado português e a sua atribuição à região de Bengala e costa de Coromandel” in *O Mundo da Laca. 2000 anos de história*, (cat. de exposição), Lisboa, Museu Calouste Gulbenkian, 2001, pp. 134-140.

<sup>39</sup> *Exotica: Portugals Entdeckungen in Spiegel fürstlicher Kunts - und Wunderkammern der Renaissance*, cat. 117

<sup>40</sup> *Exotica. Os Descobrimentos portugueses e as Câmaras de Maravilhas do Renascimento*, cat. 68.

ambassador had given to the Portuguese king. The description is long, but profoundly enlightening, almost suggesting the perspective of a jeweller, in an extraordinary document on the jewellery and weaponsmithing of the Deccan in the last third of the 1500s:

“The present we saw afterwards and they are the pieces of a dagger two handspans and a half in length, all garnished with gold and most rich gems, with so much engraving and artifice that it amazed us that there was in India those who would make such a work: the scabbard was all in solid gold, flat and unworked on one side and on the other full of richness, the hilt was all gems, it particularly had a ruby the size of a nut, and other than this it had many others; and it seems to me that it would count up to one hundred and seventy, beyond which I could not count, not being skilled, which makes it seem there would be more than two hundred, among which there were some large, particularly five, put in such an order in the scabbard that they were reaching the chape, thus they diminished a bit in size, and the smallest would be the size of an oval *vintem*, and this shape they all had excepting the biggest one which I mentioned above. Between each two rubies there was an emerald, the largest of which would be slightly larger than a *vintem*, and they also would diminish in size as they approached the chape, in such a way that the smallest one would be like a good bean, and so would be the smallest of all rubies. The chape was a sapphire which would be the size of a middle sized nut, in a dark blue colour, very fine and gleaming, and finished in a pyramid shape. It had as well thirty pearls the size of mediocre walnuts, and they were all the same in size: they were arranged in a very good order. Among the other gems there was there as well two cats-eyes, that in size equalled the pearls, and even if these are not of a great price among us, they are so among the moors, as they hold great superstition with them. Beyond all this great gem work, the small gems were innumerable and could not be counted: through all of the edge of the scabbard it had incusted many small diamonds, and all the corners of the engravings which were many were nothing if not small diamonds, and beyond all these small ones, the best two pieces of the whole gift were two very large and very rich diamonds outside the dagger’s garnish, each of them set in gold and hanging from a thin strap also in gold and the size of these was like half a silver *tostão* of a square shape with two of the corresponding tips pointing outward somewhat in the way of the papers in which sealed letters are put.<sup>43</sup>”

This dagger would have entered the treasure of the royal house, being probably kept in the Royal Armoury of the Palace of the *Ribeira* where there were exhibited countless weapons to the more illustrious visitors to the Lisbon court. There the delegate of the Pope, Cardinal Alexandrino, in 1571 admired the famous horse trappings made in Vijayanagar for D. Sebastião’s horse<sup>44</sup>. It was all made of metal covered in gold, in the *kundan* technique, incusted with rubies, diamonds, emeralds and other gems. The trappings would follow somewhat the destiny of the nation, being taken apart in Madrid,

---

<sup>41</sup> *A Herança de Rauluchantim: Ourivesaria e Objectos Preciosos da Índia para Portugal nos séculos XVI - XVIII*, (exhibition catalog), Lisboa, Museu de S. Roque / CNPCDP, 1996, cat. 5.

<sup>42</sup> Jean-Michel Massing, “Kris” in *Encompassing the globe: Portugal and the world in the 16th & 17th centuries: Reference catalogue*, Washington, 2007, cat. P-44.

<sup>43</sup> *Documenta Indica*, ed. Josef Wicki, vol. X, Roma, 1968, pp. 1060-1061.

<sup>44</sup> Maria Augusta Lima Cruz, "Uma jóia rara na Corte portuguesa - o arreo, feito em Vijayanagar, para D. Sebastião", in *Mirabilia Asiatica: Produtos raros no comércio*, coord. Jorge M. Santos Alves, Claude Guillot & Roderich Ptak, Wiesbade, Harrassowitz & Fundação Oriente, 2003, pp. 175-184.

after 1602, all the gems being removed from it, to be used in the Hapsburg jewels<sup>45</sup>. The taste of the Portuguese Royal House for oriental weapons is patent not only in the royal inventories, but equally in a listing made for Filipe II of Spain, after 1580, of several precious items in the royal treasury<sup>46</sup>, and which included weapons which were probably acquired for the ransom of captives in Morocco. An Indian dagger stands out, with a blue crystal hilt and pommel and scabbard all lined in gold, with a gold chain where it can be hung. In the chain it has a ruby rose, diamonds in pearls, another Indian dagger with a hilt and scabbard in gold, full of rubies and turquoises, another Indian dagger with a crystal hilt and hilts and scabbard full of rubies, turquoises and diamonds, and still some emeralds. As an aside let it be said that these references to Indian daggers with rubies and turquoises, a very rare combination, suggest that they are a Gujarati production. In the Al-Sabat collection there is a notable example similar to the first weapon described, with a gold hilt with rubies and turquoises<sup>47</sup>.

In this document we find another dagger with an ivory hilt and kris and scabbard of relief engraved silver “from the work of *modão* (sic) and a hilt engraved in gold with a six karat pearl”. In the list there are also registered another small dagger with an engraved ivory hilt of “*tanxia*” made of gold and a scabbard of enamelled silver and two *tailizes* with the hilts “of horn in the shape of figures and the scabbards of wood lined on one side with gold, one of them has a gold setting with seven rubies”

## 6. Conclusion

The art of the goldsmith in Indian weapons would go on through the following centuries. Still, in 1717, the 1<sup>st</sup> count of Sabugosa, 34<sup>th</sup> Viceroy of India, in his return to the Kingdom was accompanied by a short sword with hook, cross-guard and “thread” hilt, pommel and chape all in gold, garnished with a hundred and ninety diamonds, of rose cut, twenty nine of which of considerable size. He brought as well a headgear for his horse in gold, enamelled, garnished with precious stones, namely twenty six pearls, twelve of which bigger and “*apengentadas*”, meaning in pendant shape. It also had several rubies, the biggest of which cut in the round and in the centre of the piece, a great emerald. These jewels, which were later evaluated by the court’s appraiser, Manuel Pereira da Silva, who did not keep from pointing out that they were “work of India”<sup>48</sup>.

With a long tradition of goldsmith work in the creation of weapons in precious materials which is practically lost in time, the Portuguese found in the East, and particularly in India, many workshops which now supplied them with weapons of a sumptuousness which was truly unmatched. On the other hand it testified, at least throughout the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, to a taste for exoticism, which “invaded” the society of the time, as the expansion of a maritime empire itself. A fact that does much to explain the great interest which they deserved among us and the influence which would mark Indian

---

<sup>45</sup> F. J. Sánchez Cantón (ed.), *Inventarios reales, bienes muebles que pertenecieron a Felipe II*, I vol., Madrid, Real Academia de la Historia, 1956, pp. 250-251.

<sup>46</sup> B.A. 49-X-3 , fl. 489 – 294v , publ. In Nuno Vassallo e Silva, “Filipe I e as jóias da Coroa de Portugal” in *Actas do II Colóquio de Ourivesaria*, Porto, Universidade Católica Portuguesa, 2009 (no prelo).

<sup>47</sup> Robert Elgood, “Mughal Arms and the Indian Court Tradition” , p. 143.

<sup>48</sup> Nuno Vassallo e Silva, *A Ourivesaria entre Portugal e a Índia: Século XVI ao século XVIII*, pp. 140-141.

production itself, in their most diverse regions, in the most diverse techniques and ornamentations.